



Oscar Wilde, 1854-1900

Soul of Socialism

In the Progress Publishers (Moscow) Dictionary of Philosophy (1984 English edition) the Fundamental Question of Philosophy is defined as: *“the question of the relationship of consciousness to being, of thought to matter and nature, examined on two planes, first, what is primary – spirit or nature, matter or consciousness – and second, how is knowledge of the world related to the world itself, or to put it differently, does consciousness correspond to being, is it capable of truthfully reflecting the world?”*

The Communist University takes this to mean the relationship of Subject to Object, (or in other words, of mind to matter) of which the Subject – meaning ourselves, Humanity – is our

primary concern and source of value, and is therefore our source of morality.

We take it from [Christopher Caudwell](#) that freedom is the good that contains all good, and we take it from Marx and Engels in the [Communist Manifesto](#) that the free development of each is the precondition for the free development of all. We will contrast this view with the contradictory view, which is that matter can be held as primary, and that human consciousness can be treated as derivative of the material that contains it.

The principal dialectic of this set will proceed in this way, without dogma and without closure.

Socialism's Soul

Oscar Wilde [an image of him is above], perhaps with assistance from the Communist Manifesto, saw that only from the free development of each could come the free development of all, and that the purpose of Socialism is therefore, as he put it, Individualism. Oscar Wilde's "[The Soul of Man Under Socialism](#)" (MS-Word format download linked below) is a very good text to discuss, if people are ready for discussion. It is not necessary to read the whole sixteen pages, but it is very rewarding to do so. Here are a few lines:

"The personality of man will be very wonderful. It will be as wonderful as the personality of a child."

“In its development it will be assisted by Christianity, if men desire that; but if men do not desire that, it will develop none the less surely. For it will not worry itself about the past, nor care whether things happened or did not happen. Nor will it admit any laws but its own laws; nor any authority but its own authority. Yet it will love those who sought to intensify it, and speak often of them. And of these Christ was one.

“‘Know thyself’ was written over the portal of the antique world. Over the portal of the new world, ‘Be thyself’ shall be written. And the message of Christ to man was simply ‘Be thyself.’ That is the secret of Christ.

“When Jesus talks about the poor he simply means personalities, just as when he talks about the rich he simply means people who have not developed their personalities.”

This is altogether a wonderful piece of writing, full of wit, charm and surprising truth. It represents much of what the Communist University aspires towards. May it please you to persevere with it.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The Soul of Man under Socialism, 1891, Wilde.](#)
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